



# WCC Reconciliation Conference

with Kirli Saunders

## Red Room Poetry

Red Room Poetry inspires students and teachers to create, perform and publish poetry. We enliven experiences with poetry by bringing contemporary poets into classrooms across Australia to run dynamic writing workshops that awaken imaginations and support creative opportunities.

## The Workshop

On June 28, Kirli Saunders provided an overview of the Poetry in First Languages, Dharawal project and shared a poetic reading and reflection for the 120 participants of the WCC Reconciliation Conference. Under her guidance, participants then created collaborative poems, reflecting on their learnings from Elders and community throughout the conference.



## Kirli Saunders

Kirli Saunders is a proud Gunai woman with ties to the Yuin, Gundungurra, Gadigal and Biripi people. Kirli is the Manager of Poetic Learning and Aboriginal Cultural Liaison at Red Room Poetry. She was awarded 'Worker of the Year 2017' at the NAIDOC awards in the Illawarra/ Shoalhaven region and has been nominated for a National NAIDOC award in 2018. Kirli founded the Poetry in First Languages project. Her first children's picture book *The Incredible Freedom Machines*, illustrated by Matt Ottley was selected for Bologna Book Fair and is published internationally. Her second picture book *Our Dreaming* will be released by Scholastic in July 2019, *Happy Ever After* will follow in February 2020. Kirli's First Poetry Collection, *Kindred* is to be released by Magabala in 2019, it was Highly Commended in the 2018 Black&Write! prize.

## Listen

*By Zoe, Carol, Katherine,  
Michele, Martha and Jessica*

The meeting of perfect strangers  
Following footsteps of feet stepped before us.  
Many separate journeys, cultures and ways.  
Our stories are threads that when woven together,  
Create the tapestry of the world.  
Integrity.  
Silence broken.  
A need to stop squawking like the cockatoos,  
And sit, and listen.  
I will never end my reconciliation journey.

## Untitled

*By Tracey, Megan, Claire and Debbie*

A meeting place, a time to listen  
Together again  
You started to speak  
I hear the words  
Connections, kinship  
Culture, country  
Listen to Mother Earth  
It's time to rise.

## Untitled

*By Anon*

How to connect and share with people  
Hopefully through opening up and,  
It will help set you free  
Nothing will kill this spirit  
Always finding its way back home  
Let her feel your heart

## Untitled

*By Emma and Donna*

I am here to learn, to respect,  
To share.  
I am here as I care  
I am formed by the experiences lived  
Feet in the mud  
Hands in the branches of trees  
An opportunity to towards change.

## What is it about

*By Sarah, Jamie, Tessa,  
Lyn and Vanessa*

Coming together to share  
Within this space for listening.  
I listen to the trees, I hear her voice,  
There she is, the answer is the past  
We leave inspired to educate  
Those in our circles

## Untitled

*By Roslyn, Fran, Bree, Kristy and Denise*

As I sit here today listening to  
all the stories around me  
Listening to others share their  
journey awakenings  
Soon we realise we are not strangers  
but like the rivers,  
Travelling separate paths.  
A privilege to merely skim your depth  
of knowing, of place,  
Of kinship, of deep belonging  
Lets learn from the past  
And acknowledge the wrong.

## Untitled

*By Anon*

We need to walk a mile in Aboriginal shoes,  
To redeem injustice and promote justice,  
We will build relationships and learn more about each other,  
Your story is like a nightmare and a sweet dream,  
Both made to make me cry.  
Ancestors owl and bat welcome me,  
While wind rind and snake transport  
Spirit, heart and body.

**Untitled**

*By Anon*

Sorry  
For my actions  
And of those before me.

Understanding:  
The source of  
Ongoing pain

Talking:  
But sometimes  
It's more important to listen

Learning:  
Acknowledging the past  
And driving changes

Healing:  
A new way of hearing,  
Speaking and acting

**Untitled**

*By Anon*

Lets heal together,  
Respect and share  
Our mother country.  
Our journey is bright  
As we connect  
With our land.  
Please join me and  
Hold my hand.

**Untitled**

*By Anon*

Reconciliation...  
A journey that ebbs  
Its way towards connectedness  
Connectedness to country  
Connectedness to each other,  
Like a slow flowing stream.

**Untitled**

*By Anon*

You show such strength  
And are so proud.  
Yet share and disgrace  
In our past.  
We must move on,  
Acknowledge, accept,  
Respect and reconcile.

**Untitled**

*By Anon*

Today the wisdom of the trees  
Have breathed into the air  
I listened  
A sense of calm and hope  
I feel coursing,  
As I see the healing  
In people's hearts and minds,  
Catching the wind.  
Reconciliation is growing,

**Untitled**

*By Anon*

I've met you before.  
I thought.  
I've seen your face,  
We smiled,  
we talked.

Today,  
you showed me  
Your path -  
A glimpse of your  
Yesterdays.  
I listened and  
I thought,

I met you today  
And I hope  
To know more of you  
Tomorrow.

**Untitled**

*By Anon*

A personal journey,  
Finding a path  
Deeper understanding,  
Enhancing connections  
Sit with the gaps,  
Move forward -  
Connections  
Find moments each day  
Insight, perspective  
Into the deep  
Who am I.

### Untitled

*By Anon*

Coming together to sit and listen  
An important stepping stone but  
Hard to make.  
Learning, feeling and sensing all the  
Hurting, then just stopping.  
Slowing to be still, when I wish that  
I would leap in (fast forward).  
Stopping on the way  
Taking us on a journey  
Bringing more of us together;  
Little by little.

### Together

*By Betty, Louise, Mariana,  
Annelottem and Elaine*

The people build relationships,  
Together we build trust  
Today I have seen tears flow,  
How can we move forward?  
Like a boomerang, what you throw out  
Should come back  
As a community we reconciliation...  
"From little things, big things grow"

### Untitled

*By Anon*

My heart beats tears of blood  
My journey toward cultural  
Competence is once that sends my  
Mind into as many paths as  
Those who have left their  
Footprints where the emptiness  
Once was

### Untitled

*By Anon*

What journey has led me to this place.  
A purpose of higher meaning.  
Embracing inner values.  
Meaningful relationships  
Is how our nation grows.  
I realise now my journey  
Has only just begun.

### Untitled

*By Cassie  
Supported by Shane, Kelly and Matthew*

You've opened my eyes  
And shown me the way  
To look...  
To learn...  
To teach...

### Today we met

*By Alana, Hayley, Suanne,  
Deb, Melissa and Carly*

All of us ready to learn  
Unaware of our country  
Recognising our kinship  
Discovering culture  
Together we yarn about our journeys  
Creating connections  
Today we have strengthened  
Our reconciliation action  
From little actions, big actions grow.

### Untitled

*By Anon*

Hearing the stories, feeling all the people's pain  
How can I walk this journey so unaware of the past.  
Tears were shed as stories told, their Elder tellers bold  
We are all different, but our gods are the same  
First Nations Peoples need us to reconcile  
The rawness and truth that has happened in our past,  
Brings to our attention the need to act fast.

**Untitled**

*By Julie, Sue, Natalie,  
Kylie, Melissa and Fina*

As we gather together  
Hand in hand.  
People joined from  
many lands  
True words spoken from  
Many hearts broken.  
Little footprints in the sand,  
Lead the way with loving hands.

**Untitled**

*By Tina, Ivaka, Charlie,  
Robert, Natalie and Nick*

My journey has begun,  
The path ahead is paved  
with better understandings,  
Moving forward tall,  
staunch and proud,  
Inspired by Aunty Lindy  
Hearing your story today,  
Made me smile all day,  
Saying sorry was just the start,  
Each individual has their part,  
We are all Australian.

**Untitled**

*By Tanya*

I walk in and breathe hard not knowing what comes next  
But as I smile through the nerves I see no faces but I recognise the spirits that I do  
In walking my path on this unknown land but today I'm reminded of you  
Through a new friend who sang so beautifully, she sang of people as you did  
So now in my dreaming I remember I walk this place alone  
So walk tall I will until the day I'm called home.

**Untitled**

*By Aunty Lindy Lawler, Tara, Magie, Dewi, Kate, Mikylla and Ashley*

Today was filled with love, learning and open minds.  
A time and space where each person is connected, speaking together.  
A journey starts beyond our imagination, a saviour from the past.  
I listen to your stories, letting them roll in like the afternoon sun.  
The path you've walked now moves me, from your journey we've learnt a lot.  
To know my story, you must listen to my journey.  
Let's talk about this history and move forward as one.  
Moving forward together in healing and collaboration.

### Untitled

*By Anon*

Koori people of the land they live  
Stories they have to say  
Memories from past and now  
Take them on a journey everyday

Walking together on someone else's country  
On a journey of reflection, connection and reconciliation  
Acknowledging past wrongs, taking only what we need  
Heading towards the future with head and heart

We are all visitors on this land  
Surrounded by seas, trees, animals and sand  
It's on Mother Earth's land, we all stand

### Untitled

*By Sharon, Tracie, Maja,  
Matt, Michelle and Uncle Kev Butler*

Our people have existed since the beginning of  
time  
Today in a space of trust and connection  
We sit down and be still  
Time to stop and listen to the spirits  
Real stories, sad stories  
Tears trickle down like rain.

### Untitled

*By Dani, Fiona, Norelle, Jamie,  
Amy and Jenie Calaghan.*

In the mirror what do I see  
The lack of knowledge butts hard  
Against a cold frosty window pane.

Stories untold.  
Take my hand and walk with me  
I am learning. Trying to understand.  
Respectfully, patiently.  
I see your pain healing,  
Healing slowly with time.  
I am on this journey.

### Untitled

*By Cherie*

Learn from the land,  
Hold each others hand,  
Learn, reflect and connect,  
Always pay my respects!

## Truth

*By Anon*

The lack of knowledge butts heads against a frosty window pane.  
I hold a lever heavy with years of pent up wrongs  
How to breathe through?  
Listen, wait, and listen again -  
like a timid child hiding  
Knowledgeable seeds around the edges of my mind  
Whispering all the truths that have been divided  
The light of the day - brightens and enlightens  
My new beginnings.

## Untitled

*By Anon*

The truth must be told  
About our history not so old  
Respect must be excluded  
Past bridges must be mended  
There is much healing to do  
It starts with me and with you  
We can all help heal the past  
Create new relationships to last

There is nothing to delay  
Make your commitment today  
A day is start  
Connect with your heart  
Every woman and man  
Do what you can

## Pain

*By Anon*

Through your stories  
I have imagined myself in your place.  
I have felt your pain  
I have felt your joy

Through your words  
I can imagine your life  
I can imagine you exploring country,  
Celebrating in secret.

Now with the time and freedom to share,  
I see your pain healing slowly.  
Pain, the journey of your life shared,  
Weights lifted from your shoulders.

## Untitled

*By Michelle W*

My heart beats tears of blood  
My mouth speaks silence  
My words, I don't know them  
My heart aches, I never knew you  
My identity shakes as a tree in fierce winds  
I am who I am!  
I am me!

## Untitled

*By Anon*

Today we gather as one listens to the unknown,  
With smoke through the leaves,  
I stand in silence  
Watching, waiting.  
I hear the voices from far and wide,  
I'm on this journey, I feel this pain

## Untitled

*By Anon*

I was happy to have met you today  
And the truths you have shared will never fade  
I'll take your hand  
You'll take mine  
And we'll heal together  
Just in a matter of time

## Untitled

*By Anon*

A dark door opens  
Not knowing where it will take me  
With my twin sisters.  
There lays another door that  
Opens up and a journey starts  
Beyond our imaginations.  
A saviour from the past.



**Untitled**

*By Anon*

Together again  
I hear the words  
But do I hear the words?  
Listen, listen the  
Words are wise  
It's time to rise

**Untitled**

*By Anon*

Finding my place  
Finding my people  
Connections, kinship,  
Culture, country  
Listen to Mother Earth  
Who am I.

**Untitled**

*By Anon*

Reds the earth, blacks the skin  
We laugh, we breathe, we cry like you  
We have family and children whom we love  
This is our home, the land we live  
We'll shape it with you, but don't you forget  
Take care of our mother earth, she'll take care  
of you

**Untitled**

*By Anon*

We gather together  
Hand in hand  
The words spoken from  
Little footprints in the sand  
Leading the way ahead  
Like loving hands

**Shame**

*By Anon*

Shame

That I am from the land that  
Was so unlawful

As we recognise the injustice  
And strive to make things right

To walk in unison  
Into the future

**Untitled**

*By Anon*

I came today so unaware  
It touched my heart how much the stories made me care  
So much strength, hurt and heartbreak  
From all your life experiences, it all, I will take.  
Thank you for sharing culture with me  
Hopefully through opening up it will help set you free.

**Untitled**

*By Anon*

A meeting place, a time to listen  
Searching for a place for healing  
Asking questions

**Untitled**

*By Anon*


You started to spook  
Then we were there  
To a place that we're welcome to

**Untitled**

*By Rebrcca J*

Today a learning journey unknown begins  
A story of pain and sorrow  
To remember or forget in sharing a story  
How to connect and share with people  
More learning to come





**Untitled**

*By Anon*

The water greets me, welcomes me.  
I begin my day in peace and with optimism  
Cool, sparkly, embracing  
Breathe in the beauty, hold inside  
And take it with me.

**Untitled**

*By Anon*

I am here to learn, to respect  
To share  
I am here as I care for  
Our First Nations People

**Untitled**

*By Anon*

Do I know what needs to be done  
Sometimes I think I do and mostly I do not!  
Wait! I should wait, why?  
Because it's beautiful to listen to all our stories  
Because taking time is good for us all  
So wait, listen, truly consult and only then  
Plan your journey  
I will be a mother and love my children  
I will never end my reconciliation journey

**Untitled**

*By Anon*

The coming together of similar minds  
The meeting of perfect strangers with  
More questions in eyes and ears  
Air of uncertainty  
Voices combine  
Stories told  
And a new tapestry is slowly starting to  
Be woven  
'Reconciliation'  
A brighter future for a new generation

**Untitled**

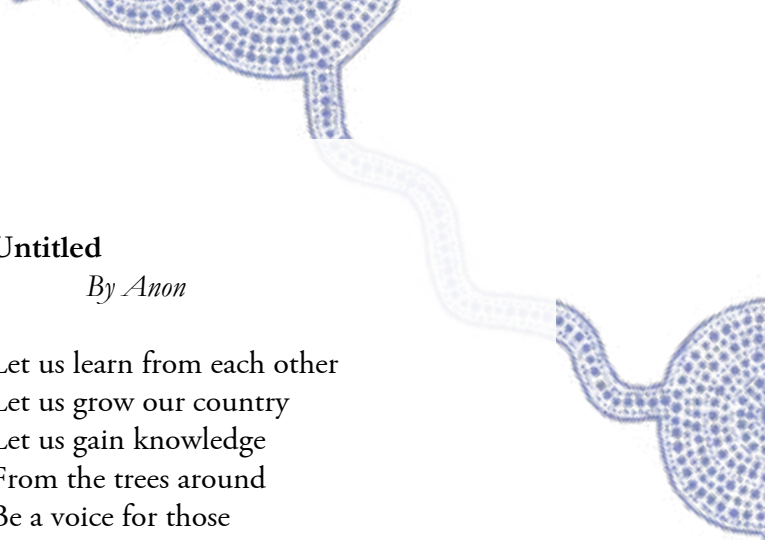
*By Anon*

Your story is both a nightmare,  
And a sweet dream,  
Both  
Make me want to cry

**Untitled**

*By Anon*

Time is endless and knows no limits  
Listening to the journey of others  
Awakens new beginnings



**Untitled**

*By Anon*

Let us learn from each other  
Let us grow our country  
Let us gain knowledge  
From the trees around  
Be a voice for those  
Who cannot

Reflect with our elders  
Let's learn from the past  
Acknowledge the wrong

**Untitled**

*By Auntie Patty*

Quieten your body, open your mind  
Listen to the stories that she cannot leave behind  
Embrace her hands, let her feel your heart  
Give her all your warmth. That's a nice place to start  
Understand her pain. All she knows is to nurture  
Together we can join to build a brighter future.

### Untitled

*By Anon*

We came together in a new meeting place. All strangers to begin  
Hesitant at first we slowly shared their songs. And as words flowed like  
Water, a trickle becomes an ebbing river  
Soon we realise we are not stranger, but like the river, travelling  
Separate paths.  
We are heading to an ocean of knowledge, understanding and acceptance

### Untitled

*By Anon*

Like a boomerang, what you throw out should come back.  
Take the time to connect, build relationships and start closing the gap.

### Untitled

*By Anon*

As I sit here today listening to all the stories around me, I realise that  
Some I have liked and some are new to me.  
Then there are those that have not walked my paths and don't understand the darkness  
That my family have faces  
But it's not their fault - as the journey they have walked is different from me.

Maybe this day is meant to be, as our paths meet and we can start a  
New journey together

### Untitled

*By Anon*

Natural balance in this land  
A thing of beauty it was  
Exploited by western demand  
Now we are sorry  
This white men of oz

### Untitled

*By Sarah*

The past is dark, something to hide  
When I ask the question all I see is hurt and told why  
But as a kid I always loved the dirt.  
So I sit beside the sea hoping that will mend me,  
I go back ask him why, those answers will never  
Be told he will always say why? Back to bush I  
Go, to feel the dirt and let go of the hurt.  
I listen to the trees I hear her voice, there she is the answer to  
The past, she has done in the rustle of the trees, A  
Beautiful butterfly floats past.

### Untitled

*By Anon*

What is it about  
Creating an atmosphere  
Sharing, talking, thinking  
Everyone contributing  
To a journey of reconciliation

**Untitled**

*By Anon*

Coming together to share and listen  
Hearing elders share their stories of truth  
We learnt and reflected on our own experiences  
Journeys, senses, insights and action plans  
As the light outside faded it said without words  
That what we need is more time

**Untitled**

*By Anon*

I hear your stories and I am sorry...  
Together we can  
Change the future  
I have hope for  
Reconciliation.

**Untitled**

*By Anon*

We need to acknowledge and learn  
Paying our respects to those before us.  
We listen to the stories of others  
And the journeys that has paved their path.  
We leave inspired to  
Educate those in our circles

**Untitled**

*By Anon*

Knowing your story  
Sharing your history  
Respecting your truths  
Pathways to knowing, growing, healing

**Untitled**

*By Rachel B*

I hear your stories  
They scare me.  
For this could have happened to me.  
Today we are joined  
With a similar goal  
Of acknowledging the people,  
The land and the sea

**Untitled**

*By Anon*

You've opened my eyes and shown me the way  
To look  
To learn and  
To teach

**Untitled**

*By Anon*

I see you. I feel your pain. Searching for reconnection.  
But your journey is never ending  
I am learning. Trying to understand. Respectfully. Patiently.  
My journey is never ending too  
We are all building bridges - trying to connect  
To places, to culture, to people - each other  
All walking different paths. To find our place  
Let's walk together

**Untitled**

*By Anon*

How can I walk this journey so unaware of the past  
The pain, the shame, I know nothing about  
My eyes are now open, to a small glimpse of what was  
How do I say sorry, and begin to mend the past  
Small people looking to me wanting to learn  
Let's go outside and listen, with mouths closed tight  
Show respect, show understanding and we can move  
Forward together.

**Untitled**

*By Anon*

In the mirror what do I see  
Only one image but there are two of me  
Which world do I walk in today  
I feel my connection to culture is far away  
Time will tell where I fit in  
But it should not have to be a test  
Connection to mother is what I feel,  
it is my place where my heart can heal  
My ancestors singing and calling me,  
which world is the one I see  
I am torn for I love who I am  
The internal fight must command

**Untitled**

*By Anon*

Myths cloud this history  
Stories untold  
Question why the mystery  
The truth untold  
The learning begins  
Time to listen.  
Dispelling myths, they unpin.  
There is hope, the future glistens.

**Untitled**

*By Anon*

I am an earthly vessel  
Ready to fill  
Listening  
Comprehending  
Feeling.  
An opportunity to move towards change  
Change starts together.

**Untitled**

*By Cherie S*

Learning from your land,  
Hold each others hand,  
Learn, reflect and connect  
Always pay my respects!

**Untitled**

*By Anon*

As a way to show respect, we take the time to now reflect.  
The stories shared were really now, the wounds in their tears were really sore.  
Some were humble, some were mas. The atrocities encountered were really sad.  
Tears were shared as stories told, their elder tellers were really bold.  
Consultation is a process of give and take, young children futures are at stake.  
We're all heading towards reconciliation and becoming one solid inclusive nation.

**Untitled**

*By Anon*

Mother earth we hear you  
We hear the gentle whisper of you in the trees  
We hear your roar in the oceans  
We walk this journey together  
Seeking your guidance or encouragement  
A we pause under the gumtree we promise  
To speak with you, not for you

**Untitled**

*By Anon*

We are all different, but our goals are the same,  
We hear the wind calling out our name,  
Sharing the land, respectfully, learning about country  
Our journey is long, our limbs are slow, but with  
A shared journey we can get there hand in hand  
But we will get there in the end.